

Now is the Time: Our Church has Invited Us to Speak Up!

Reflection by Barb Belle

Women and Justice Issues team held a virtual prayer and discussion titled: A Church for Our Daughters on Wednesday, April 20, 2022. While not a large group, the mix of vowed religious and laity allowed for some personal sharing of about our experiences of the Synod process. We creatively and audaciously explored the question: What do you hope the Church will look like in 5-10 years? Every participant was very engaged!

Marceta Fleming Reilly of the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities (IO-MLC) presented about the report that will be sent to Vatican from the IO-MLC. Marceta observed that as Marianists we naturally value everyone at the round table; everyone contributing their voice as “discipleship of equals”. We strive to be attentive to the “signs of the times”. We agreed that as the Family of Mary, we have much to offer as a Marian face to the larger church. Our Marianist charism is naturally a synodal lifestyle of inclusion and listening and allowing space for differences. Marianists have been welcoming changes and for some time have been encouraging laity to step up and lead in the future.

Fr. Gene Contadina, S. M. spoke sincerely that he felt “the Church needs to be in the game and not controlling it... Don’t keep judging people and making them leave.” He stated that diversity and wholeness is missing from our church. Various contributions should be appreciated and welcomed by various people. At the same time we hold onto values, we still need to listen and learn how to be holy; to allow broken people to make errors, to come to the light while they are free to be who they are on the journey.

We were hopeful that times are changing (although be it slowly) to promote increasing the influence of women in the Church? The ancient model of “House church” is being used to discuss how our faith traditions can be applied to everyday life. The larger Catholic Church could build closeness with focused small faith communities. Several people mentioned that their parish structure is not fruitful but stifles growth of individuals. We shared our own personal spirituality that was developed in small faith communities. We see those groups mobilizing the laity and encouraging collaboration. Many of us discussed that often we find our spiritual energies outside our local parish.

It is important to recognize that our Church is on a journey with all humanity throughout history; now it is time for all people to have an opportunity to speak up about what they would like the church to be!

More than one participant expressed the fact that unless women’s justice is addressed during this synod process, then it may be difficult to remain Catholic in 5 - 10 years.

Follow this link for a full recording of April Synod event: